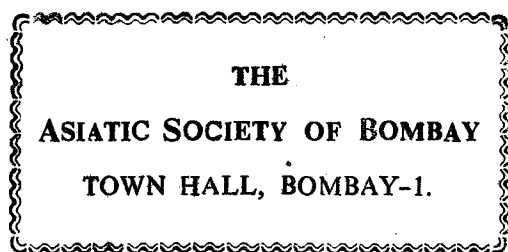


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THE  
SUEZ CANAL,

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BEING A

Practical and Detailed Account from its Opening,

WITH

A GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

OF THE SAME,

SHOWING THE EXACT DEPTH OF WATER FROM PORT SAID TO  
SUEZ, INCLUDING BOTH THE ENTRANCES AND THE  
HARBOURS, DRAWN TO SCALE.

BY

CAPTAIN CHARLES CHAPMAN,

*Special Representative for Messrs. Mosses & Mitchell, the accredited Transit  
Agents for London of the Suez Canal Company.*

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## THE SUEZ CANAL.

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THE distance from Alexandria to Port Said is about 160 miles.

The weather about the coast is fine at least nine months of the year; but there is often a sort of haze hanging over the low land, even when it is fine clear weather at sea.

On the morning of the 16th November, I arrived off Port Said in the P. and O. Co.'s steamship Delta, and, as daylight came, several other steamers were off the port, among them the Aigle, with l'Impératrice Eugénie on board. The weather was beautifully fine and clear, and the sea was as smooth as a mirror. The first thing we saw was the masts of the ironclad squadron lying outside the outer breakwater, about three miles distance. As soon as we could clearly make out our position the engines were set in motion, and, like all the other vessels in sight, we shaped our course for the high concrete lighthouse, which could be plainly seen towering high above the masts of the ships.

The Aigle was next in front of the Delta, and the latter, out of courtesy to the former, slackened speed, in order to keep a respectful distance from l'Impératrice Eugénie's yacht, which was steaming at a slow speed directly towards the ironclad fleet.

About half-past seven a.m. the yacht closed in with the fleet, and, when at a distance of about a quarter of a mile, the

saluting commenced from the heavy guns of the war ships. There were two Austrian ships to the right of the English fleet, and, being the nearest to the yacht, they were the first to commence, and, while they were saluting, the *Aigle* lay quite still; but, when the salutes ceased, and the smoke had cleared away, she steamed gracefully up to the two ironclads, and you could quite fancy that you saw her making her graceful acknowledgment of the honour or attention paid. After laying close to the two above-mentioned ships for a few moments, her helm was placed to starboard, and her head brought in the direction of the English fleet; and, at slow speed, looking excessively dignified, she stood towards it; this manœuvre was a signal for the other ironclads to commence their salute, which was done in earnest, and, for a short interval of time, we were almost deafened by the roaring of the heavy guns, while the fleet was entirely lost in the smoke; the time of saluting was so well chosen that the *Aigle* was always out of it—even the smoke seemed to pay her the compliment of getting out of her way.

As soon as the salute was ended the stillness seemed to make one feel quite giddy. While we were watching the smoke clear away, and as soon as it had cleared the fleet, the engines of the *Aigle* were again set in motion, and, in the same graceful manner, she steamed towards the fleet; and, after passing under the stern of the Admiral's ship, she steamed onwards, apparently making her graceful bows all the way, until she had cleared all the ships of war, when more speed was put on, and she steered fast towards the entrance of Port Said, and was soon lost among the large fleet of ships in the harbour.

The *Delta*, by this time, had closed in with the fleet also, always taking care to keep a respectful distance from the *Aigle*.

I noticed that, when making Port Said harbour, the first

thing you see is the high concrete lighthouse before-mentioned; and, after steaming up to it for some distance, the next objects you sight are the two obelisks which mark the entrance to the canal; and, after steaming still further in shore, the tops of the many buildings appear above the horizon long before you can see the land; but after steaming well in, a low brown mark will appear on the horizon, and that brown mark is the land, and appears, when close to it, like disconnected strips of sand.

While making for Port Said, having made the lighthouse, it should be kept a little on the starboard bow, as the breakwater runs far outside the concrete lighthouse, and the breakwater itself will soon be seen looking like a low dark line not much above the water's edge, and appearing rather narrow for a breakwater. When you get sight of it you must steer for the very end, easily distinguished by a small lighthouse, which looks very much like a sentry-box on stilts. A ship may anchor anywhere about the outside, and six fathoms is found a good distance from the end of the breakwater; and, unless you are acquainted, you had better take a pilot before rounding the latter; but, if you do round it without a pilot, the deepest water is to be found between 25 and 50 fathoms from the concrete blocks which form the breakwater.

After passing a few fathoms inside the outer end of the breakwater, the water shoals to about  $22\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and it appears that a bank, which is formed of sand and mud, is the result of a current and wash which sets round the end of the work, and settles down there in the eddy. With the exception of that bank, which is only a few fathoms in width, you carry from 4 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms right into the harbour, where there is plenty of water for heavy ships. The capabilities of this harbour will be best described by giving an account of the number of ships in it on the 16th November, the day of celebrating the inauguration.

After passing along the whole length of the breakwater, keeping about the same distance from it all the way, viz., from 25 to 50 fathoms, you come to the point of land on which stands the concrete lighthouse, and further in on the same point stands the town of Port Said.

It was just outside this point that the first of a line of frigates was moored, and they formed the line of vessels on the starboard side of the harbour going in. On the port side there was only one frigate, moored in the same manner; but after passing her, the vessels were moored in a tier, with their anchors down in the middle of the harbour, and their sterns hove into the shore by means of ropes, made fast to screw piles, placed there for the purpose. In this tier there lay about twenty vessels, whose tonnage was from 3,500 tons down to 1,000 tons. The above complete the number of vessels on the port side of Port Said harbour.

On the starboard side, as before mentioned, there lay a line of frigates, about 10 in number. At the termination of this line was an inlet, where vessels of smaller tonnage lay; and in this inlet, which formed three sides of a square, there lay about 25 sail of vessels, averaging about 200 tons. These consisted mostly of craft trading to the port.

Further up, on the same side, there was another inlet or bay, in which vessels were moored in tiers, having their anchors down in the middle of the harbour also, and their sterns hove in towards the shore. In this inlet or bay the vessels lay in tiers, two and three deep; and the number of vessels laying in this part would be about 45, and they consisted of vessels of various kinds, from a heavy frigate to a 700 ton steamer. This last lot mentioned completed the number of vessels in Port Said at 10 A.M., 16th November, 1869, and I should think there was room for about 40 sail more of large vessels.

Next, and nearest to the mouth of the canal lay the

Aigle, looking like a picture; the next in order was the magnificent yacht of the Viceroy, the Mahrousa, built by the Messrs. Samuda—I should say the very finest ship in the world; she is 3,500 tons, and the picture of nobleness and beauty. Next in the tier to her was the Emperor of Austria's yacht, an ordinary looking steamer; then the Delta, the vessel that I was on board of, and from which vessel I had a good opportunity of seeing all that passed of importance.

At 10.30 all was order—every ship was moored; and it is certainly a great credit to those in charge, the way the vessels were moored, and for the good order and good humour that was kept up throughout the whole of that day. I am sure that every person who was there will agree with me in saying that, at 10.30 A.M., on the 16th, Port Said looked like a harbour that had been established twenty years. Such was the good order—the ship-shape way—in which everything was done, that it gained for them who did it the highest respect and congratulations of all who were lucky enough to be in Port Said on that memorable occasion.

By 11 o'clock everything was arranged for commencing the inauguration, or the ceremony of pronouncing the Canal open, and blessing it. At this hour the excitement commenced in earnest. It soon became known that the Empress was to visit the Viceroy on board his yacht, that the Emperor of Austria and Crown Prince of Prussia, with other representatives of nations were to do the same; at about half-past eleven the visiting commenced, and as soon as the Empress was known to be leaving her yacht, the roar of heavy guns began to deafen every one in the harbour for a short time. As soon as the salutes had subsided, the Empress was seen to step on board the Viceroy's yacht, while the national air of France was being played to receive her. Shortly afterwards the Emperor of Austria was seen to mount the ladder of the same vessel, and the tune on

board the yacht was immediately changed for his national air ; then followed the Emperor of Prussia and some representatives of other nations. The national air of each nation was playing as its representative prince mounted the gangway of the Viceroy's yacht, until the Ambassador and an Admiral for the English nation made their appearance, and a very faint "God save the Queen" was played, every note of which tune seemed to say, where is the English prince to represent the English nation ; and while Frenchmen asked Englishmen why an English prince was not there, Englishmen were obliged to say, Why, indeed ?

However, on went the festive gaiety. The sun was shining brightly from a sky that was as clear, as the waters of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean mixed in the great Canal of the world. There was nothing to mar the enjoyment of that day, as while the cool breezes blew under the awnings of the Viceroy's splendid ship, and fanned his august guest, so it did over the quarterdeck of many a fine ship, and cooled many guests of the Viceroy's, who were equally high and mighty in their spheres of life.

The visit of the royal guests on board the Viceroy's yacht did not last long ; and again the national air of each nation struck up as each of its representatives descended the ladder.

The next grand sight was to see the Empress Eugenie pay a visit to Francis Joseph of Austria. As soon as the Empress was along side, the Emperor descended his gangway ladder, hat in hand, to the very bottom step to meet her ; the kindly recognition of each other, the graceful way the tiny hand was held out, and the manly and respectful manner it was taken hold of ; then to watch them mount the ladder together was a sight not to be seen every day ; and, finally, when the Empress put her arm through the arm of the Emperor, and walked along the quarterdeck together, it was really a noble sight.

Shortly after this the Crown Prince of Prussia arrived,

and was also received by Austria. But he did not go to the bottom of the ladder this time; he met him half way up. The salutes were still going on, one after the other, and each one answered in its turn. The thundering roar of heavy guns made everything shake again and again.

The signals were still being made from one ship to another; and as each Emperor, Prince, or Representative left or entered the ships, the saluting and manning of yards continued, and every now and then the booming of the guns was to be heard from the iron-clad fleet anchored outside, which, together with the report of the guns inside, reminded me of the bombardment of Sebastopol.

By noon most of the visits had been made and returned, and, so far as the guns were concerned, the new harbour of Port Said was quiet, but still very gay; and as the bright rays of the noonday sun shone on the desert sands, so it did light up the different colours of many proud and powerful nations. It was most remarkable that not a single American ship was to be seen among the many that crowded the harbour. There were certainly two American flags to be seen on shore, and that was all that could be seen of our brother Jonathan.

Shortly after noon it was known all round the harbour that 3 P.M. was the time appointed for the ceremony of inauguration; and between the hours of noon and three in the afternoon, the time was spent in paying friendly visits, getting lunch, and making ready to go on shore.

Just before three there was another stir—all was on the move, and making their way to the landing-place; and as the Empress and the Emperor passed the different war ships, the yards were repeatedly manned, and each dignitary was cheered in his turn.

By the time the Empress reached the landing-place, there were many people there to receive her, and she was closely followed by the Emperor of Austria.

The principal landing-place was a sort of wooden wharf, just high enough out of the water to be level with a boat's gunwale. It was firm and well boarded, and from the wharf the boarding was continued right along the sandy road to the place where the ceremony was to be performed, and which was about a quarter of a mile long. On each side of this "wooden road" were numerous posts, each having at its upper end a streamer, and painted in gay colours at the lower end. In a line with these posts or poles were drawn up Egyptian troops in single file, and their faces toward each other, and were continued the whole length of the quarter of a mile.

At the end of the above-mentioned road there were erected three platforms—one for the Empress and the Emperor, and other dignitaries, one for the Egyptian priests, and the other for the French priests. These platforms were about five feet above the ground, were reached by wooden steps, which were richly carpeted, and above the platforms were richly-decorated canopies.

It was to one of these platforms that the Emperor of Austria led the Empress from the boat along the wooden road, while various bands were playing all the way.

The ceremony consisted of some praying, and afterwards a long speech. At the end of the speech, the ceremony was considered at an end, and the whole party marched back again to the boats; and by the time the ships were reached, it was time to dress for dinner. So ended the first gay and festive day at Port Said.

At eight bells it was made known throughout the fleet that each ship was to be ready, and to have steam up at six o'clock the next morning.

On the morning of the 17th, at 6 A.M., steam was ready on board of most of the ships, and each steamer had a number given to her and a set of charts, and many had pilots put on

board; but seven o'clock came, and there was no signs of a move; eight o'clock came, and every vessel lay still; and so they lay until about half-past eight, when the Empress's yacht was pointed to the Canal, and shortly afterwards the pretty craft was seen to move slowly a-head, and in a short time only her tall, straight masts were to be seen, like three poplar trees growing out of the sand of the Desert.

Ten minutes after, and when the Empress's yacht had got the proper distance a-head, then started No. 2 of the first division, which was the yacht of the Emperor of Austria. In ten minutes after, No. 3 started; and so on, each ship keeping the proper distance from the others, until No. 23, or the twenty third boat, was the Hawk, belonging to the Telegraph Construction Company. This vessel being of light draft, viz. about twelve feet, I selected her as being sure to go right through to Suez, and it is to the courtesy of Mr. Pender who represented several important telegraph companies, also the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and the Cotton Supply Association, that I owe being fortunate enough to get on board that ship.

From some cause, which I could not understand, the Delta had no place or number assigned to her, and for that reason I was compelled to seek a passage in some other vessel.

As the Hawk entered the Canal it was plain to be seen that the same care and attention had been paid to mark the passage through, as had been paid to every other arrangement so far as we had gone.

The Canal is quite easy of access, and is marked on either side by very high obelisks, which are of wood, and painted red.

When leaving Port Said Harbour for the Canal it is necessary to have the steamer (if a large one) properly pointed, so as to make at once for the middle parts of the Canal, where the deepest water is, and strangers should move ahead slow until they get fairly into the Canal, and until their eye gets

accustomed to the narrow channel, and until they get past the curve which takes them on as far as the Ruines de Tennis; and having got thus far, the Canal is quite straight for many miles.

On this occasion stakes were driven in on both sides of the deep water, and it was quite impossible to go wrong if you only kept between the stakes.

It was a grand sight indeed; after the Hawk passed the Ruines de Tennis, far on in the desert was to be seen the smoke of the Empress's yacht, the leading vessel, and a little nearer the smoke of the yacht of the Emperor of Austria; next the smoke and the masts of the yacht of the Crown Prince of Prussia; then still plainer the masts of the Netherlands Royal yacht; then looming still larger the Russian frigate; and the hull of the next, which was H.M.S. "Psyche"; thus one after the other could be counted, and were to be seen distinctly until the eye rested on the pretty little Cambria, being towed by a French steam yacht. For miles in front it was one narrow line of life; on either side were broad miles of inhospitable treacherous desert sands. It was truly a grand sight to be steaming at half speed through a part where only a few years ago a camel dare not venture; it was certain death to any living thing that dared to face the journey, and now Kings, Queens, and Princes, were boldly steaming through, amid the greatest of luxury. Full and fertile for enterprise must have been the mind of the man who said,—This desert can and shall be crossed by ships of all classes. Proud indeed may his countrymen be of him, but for whose indomitable pluck, the Canal would never be as it is now—a *grand success*. None but a great man would have gone on with a good will, while being sneered and jeered at by some of the world's greatest men. But to-day repays him for all he has gone through. There are already twenty-four steamers going half speed through the desert, regardless of washing down banks, and there is another twenty-four, each following in their turn. I have before said look a-head, there

is a long line of steamers steaming farther and farther into the desert; look a-stern, all is life and civilization; there is a beautiful harbour full of ships of heavy tonnage, there is a town with its five or six comfortable hotels, and many happy families living in it; there are children who have been born there running about, and playing with their little mates, and also enjoying the festive arrangements. Only think of what it was a few years ago, a sand-bank partly under water.

Now on we go as fast as the engine will drive us; and all we have to do is to keep right in the centre of the Canal, which is perfectly straight. As we go along we keep on sounding; there is a man on each side of the bridge, and each of them are taking two casts of the lead every minute. The depth is carefully measured, and the result is, that we find 26 and 27 feet on each side of the vessel; and, by slackening the engine, and keeping a little to one side, any vessel of moderate size might warp past; but it would be necessary for both vessels to be careful.

In this straight part of the Canal the sand has been taken out of the bed of it, and thrown up in about equal quantities on each side; mixed with this sand there is a kind of clay or mud, and, from having been exposed to the atmosphere, it is commencing to show signs of vegetation on both sides.

About seven miles up the Canal the sand on each side is covered with water, only a few inches deep; some flocks of small birds are to be seen on it; and at this part of the beach, where the wash of the water of the Canal reaches, seems to be strewed with small shells, causing it to look very much like a pebbly beach.

Soon after passing a place called Ras-et-Ech there is an extensive lake, and the birds are very numerous on it.

At a place called Ahlanat, near the Plain de Peluse, the banks are still more of a muddy nature, and are showing signs of slip, but not to any great extent. The water here seems to

be more mixed with the mud than at any other part; the banks are high and uniform.

About seventeen miles from Port Said the Canal has been well finished, by placing stones, forming a sort of wall, which prevents the sand from washing in. All this distance the tide has been running against us, at the rate of about one mile and a quarter per hour, and the depth of water continues at twenty-six to twenty-eight feet. We are now about twenty-five miles up the Canal, and at this part there seems to be a good deal of drift sand; but vegetation is fast showing itself, which is stopping the sand from drifting. We are still going at full speed, and all the other vessels are in sight a-head; and as the sun is setting behind the sand hills far away, we are closing in with the pretty little village of Kantara.

After passing Kantara, the banks are very high, and the water is about seventeen feet deep; the channel is marked every few fathoms with floating stakes, but a ship might very easily go through without these marks, as the channel is right in the middle of the Canal, and, it being one continual straight line, a vessel might travel through even in night time.

Shortly after passing Kantara, the sand seems very loose, and has the appearance of shifting, or travelling. It seems to have been heaped up by the wind into small pyramids, and has that wavy appearance which is only to be seen where the sand travels with the wind. The stones which have been thrown on the beach are partly covered with the sand mentioned above, and this part of the Canal differs much from the other parts we have passed, there being no sign of vegetation, which is a sure sign of travelling sand.

I notice that there is only a short space of shifting sand, as a little further on the brushwood is growing, and we soon pass the loose sand. The Canal itself is good, and easy to navigate; steam ships over 1,500 tons may pass each other here if they only take the trouble to slow their engines, and

each vessel gets out of the way by keeping to its proper side a little. I may mention here, that I have not seen any part of the Canal where vessels of moderate size could not pass each other with comparative ease.

Some little distance past Kantara, and near the ruins of Carrière de Platre, piles have been driven, one every hundred feet; and about five miles further on, the straight line of the Canal is broken by a very sharp bend, and it needs much more care than the straight part, when strangers are navigating it; but persons well acquainted, and knowing what to expect further a-head, may steam through this part at the rate of six miles per hour. The tide, or current, seems to be less here.

After passing some distance through this curve, we came into the open water of Lake Ballah, and there is rather a sharp point to turn, but it is not very difficult. After passing this lake we entered into a very deep cutting, and millions of tons of sand must have been removed from this part, and we find no difficulty in steaming through it by moonlight. The current here is again running about one mile and a quarter per hour towards Port Said.

It is now 9 p.m. The moon is at its full, and shining brightly; the sky very clear; and we are still steaming at the rate of about six miles per hour, and the depth of water is twenty-six to twenty seven feet. We are still going through a cutting, and it is very much like the cutting in the railway between New-cross and Forest-hill, without the grass; and it really seems child's-play to bring a steamer through it. A vessel drawing twenty-three feet water could have been brought up to this point with the greatest ease.

At 9.45 p.m., the crew of a boat from the next vessel in front—which had been waiting for us to come up to her—hailed us, and informed us that their vessel had stopped for the night, and also that they expected us to send our boat to the

vessel that was following us, to tell them that we had anchored, and request them to do the same to the one that was following them, and so on until each vessel was stopped at the proper distance.

Having sent the boat away astern, the anchor was let go in the middle of the Canal, in twenty-eight feet water, and a small anchor (which each vessel was ordered to carry over the stern when entering the Canal) was carried out astern and let go; and there we were, at 10 p.m., moored (in a place very much resembling the deep cutting of a railway) head and stern for the night; and in a short time all was still on board, and there was nothing to be seen but the two high banks of the desert sand, the full moon shining brightly, and the bright blue sky, now and then made still brighter by the bursting of rockets, which showed that rejoicing had commenced at the new city of Ismailia.

Shortly after daylight next morning, the vessel next a-head of us got under-weigh, and we soon followed her example; while getting our anchors, we found the holding ground to be very good, it was composed of a sort of blue clay, and was as much as twelve hands could do to weigh a small kedge.

Having got the anchors, we commenced to move on a-head slow, in order to keep the proper distance from the other vessels.

The spot where we anchored for the night was just half way between Senil d'El Guisr and Mariam. A little beyond the latter place stands the Châlet du Viceroy; and after steaming about four miles, we opened out the Lake Timsah which presented to the view a strange but pretty sight. It is here that you get the first sight of the fresh water canal, and it is also here where the railway commences.

Lake Timsah is a broad sheet of clear blue water, and abounds with fish. It is supposed that they come both from

the Red Sea and from the Mediterranean (an officer, belonging to a P. & O. boat, declared that he ate for breakfast one morning a fish from each of the seas, and they disagreed with him; but when he ate them separately, he found no ill effects) The channel across the Lake to Ismailia was marked much in the same way as the Canal itself, with floating stakes, having on their upper end a small white flag. There was no difficulty at all in finding out the Channel; but we steamed slowly through it to the anchorage off Ismailia, where we found the berths all marked with buoys, which were numbered, and we anchored in four fathoms water.

The town of Ismailia is not a very large one, but on this occasion it seemed a very large place indeed, as there were thousands of tents pitched outside the town and in among the buildings. Among these were a great number of Arab tents, and there were also tents for visitors to sleep in, and eating and drinking tents in any number, and especially the latter. Any one, whether invited or not, could get any kind of drink, in any quantity, by asking for it, and you had no reason to ask twice. It seemed a pleasure to those in charge to open a bottle for you; and if any person were so disposed, he might have got drunk, and then sleep, get up, and get drunk again.

At 10 o'clock, P.M., we all prepared for the ball. The whole of the town, as also the tents, were illuminated, and the magnificence of the sight was beyond description. The whole place was a blaze of grandeur and elegance. There was no monotony, for every tent, every house, every street, every corner, every sentry, and every laid-up dredger had their little auxiliaries; and whichever way you looked, whether toward the Desert or toward the Lake, some kind of firework would be sure to squirt up in the air to amuse you.

Then the Lake itself was lighted up, as no other lake ever has been lighted before, and the vessels belonging to the Viceroy especially. Every port-hole had a string of lamps

round the edge, then another row round the covering-board outside, and another above it again, round the rough-tree rail, then running right out along the jib-guys to the jib-boom end, then down to the water's edge.

There was a large lamp placed on the cat head, which represented the fore-tack, and a row of small lamps run up to the fore-yard arm, having a bend or curve in it like the bends of the sail, another rope was also run along over the forecastle, which represented the foot rope, and then the lee leach, running up to the lee yard arm completed the foresail. The top-sail and topgallant-sail were represented in the same way until the ship seemed to be under a crowd of lighted bolt ropes with the blue sky for the bellies of the sails. The poles of the masts above the yards were represented also by a string of lamps, and the truck itself by a larger lamp of a different colour. Besides these, the funnels and the funnel stays were shown by several strings of lamps. Several other vessels were decorated in the same style, and many others were dressed in a less magnificent style, while the anchorage looked quite as beautiful as the town of Ismailia. The night was splendid, just enough wind to cool you, and every ten seconds as many rockets would go hissing away into the air from the bows and the sterns of the fantastically dressed ships, which seemed to be keeping the whole game alive.

The ball-room was crowded, and there were some ladies present, but there was no room to dance, and scarcely room for the Empress and other ladies to draw their train after them.

In the supper hall there was room for about five hundred to sit down at one time, and there were as many taking their supper standing up, and that sort of thing went on till 4 o'clock in the morning and at that hour there seemed to be no lack of eating and drinking.

At half past four o'clock on the morning of the 19th November Ismailia was still alive and large numbers of

people still remained in the ball-room, and many of them at the supper table which (even up to this time) was well supplied with everything the most fastidious man could wish for.

Feeling hot, and quite full of both meat and drink, I took a stroll round the town, and among the tents belonging to the Arab visitors, and it was really a queer sight; eating, drinking, and smoking was the order of that morning; go where you would, a knife, fork, and bottle was held out to you, and you might sit down as long as you like, where you like, and eat and drink to your heart's content; and, as soon as you had had your fill, you might go to bed, as there were numerous tents with beds in them for the purpose; in fact, it seemed that everybody, from the smallest boy to the greatest man, was employed to make each other happy; and right well did they do their task. Look where you would, the lamps were still burning brightly, and every now and then a fresh lot of fireworks would go spinning up into the air, and, for a moment, light up the streets, which were marked out by long lines of lanterns, while far away across the desert, perhaps by the fresh-water canal, perhaps from some lonely station on the railway, or by the maritime canal, flights of zigzag rockets would ascend, light up the distant desert with coloured stars, and, at times, with showers of falling gold, and with golden snakes running fantastically through the air; and so on went the gay and festive scenes at Ismailia.

At length daylight came peeping over the desert sand; and how delicious it was to have a short walk away from the town, and the tents, and get alone to enjoy the cool breeze and fresh air of the early morning; to stand up on a small hillock of sand, and look round and bring to mind what you were looking at, how you got there, and, finally, what was likely to be the result of all you saw.

You were looking at a wonderful, great, and grand work, on the eve of finish. You were looking at a great and grand

inland port that (so to say) only came to life and light yesterday, standing with your back to Zaggazig; to the left of you is Damiette; to your right an immense track of desert; in front of you is the Lake Timsah; and over on the other side is another immense track of desert; and just look at the heavy purple hue of the rising sun (which is still far below the horizon of the sea of sand); watch it, as the sun gets nearer to the edge, how it changes the sky, which overhangs the desert, into a mass of red and scarlet splendour, intermixed with dashes and streaks of golden hue; then, as the upper limb of the sun shows itself, and shoots out its rays far and wide, looking like streaks of motionless lightning, watch it as it gets higher and higher, till its lower limb is clear of the sand hills. It now, for the first time in the knowledge of man, shines on a fleet of ships in that lake; and such a fleet there were: ships for pleasure, for trade, and for war, and of many nations, with the rulers of empires and kingdoms on board, all brought together by the kind and princely invitation of one man. Will the sun ever again shine on such a gathering—has it ever shone on such a muster? Then look at the old dredgers stowed away, as it were, in clusters in every corner out of the way to make room for the more magnificent craft. They look like navvies in their working dress in a ball-room.

Take a glance to the right, and see the fresh water canal and the railway running side by side; look directly behind you, and you see the same sort of thing; mark the vegetation that is rushing up on each side of the fresh water stream; see the tiny, weeping willows that have only recently been planted, looking as fresh and as green as an olive tree during a sunshiny shower; look wherever a drop of water has been, how soon vegetation takes its place, showing clearly that the whole of the vast desert has been parched with thirst, and needed wetting only to bring forth its fat.

The guests of the Viceroy have been invited, it is said, to see the Canal—is that all that is to be seen?—or have they been invited to see—if they are long-sighted enough—that the Suez Canal is only a mite of what is to follow. Look again at the new town of Ismailia, and the fleet of fine steamships lying in its spacious harbour. As I said before, you see a town and port that was only born yesterday, and it is the first time that ever the morning sun shone on it in full life. What will it be in twenty years hence but one of the most important places on the face of the earth? Ask yourself the question, is there another place like it—can there ever be another place of its kind, that has to the right of it, to the left of it, in front of it, and behind it land that only wants a single touch to make it “flow with milk and honey,” or make it spring into a cotton field that would clothe millions; then again think of the far away land that it will bring into cultivation—commerce with the north and south side of the Mediterranean.

And think of the millions of acres that will be worked in consequence of the opening of the Suez Canal. Then, again, the land about Nubia on one side of the Red Sea, and Hedjaz on the other, inhabited by people who are dying off because they have not a place within their reach where they can buy from, or where they can take their produce for sale. Think again and again of this grand centre, and what it is going to do for Egypt, and ask yourself whether it may not make it as great a country, in days to come, as it was in days gone by; and, instead of doing damage to the shipping interest, as some think it will, it will only increase the trade of the whole world, and there will be more demand for both steam and sailing vessels.

As the sun got up, so did the crews on board the different ships, and the festoons of lamps which had lighted up the lake, but which were now dead, were lowered down, and at eight bells

the ships were again dressed with flags, and soon after breakfast lake Timsah was alive with steam launches, gigs, and cutters, moving quickly about in every direction. The first to make a move was a French steam yacht which had the pretty yacht Cambria in tow, the winner of so many races, and a credit to the owner and the country to which she belongs.

Shortly after breakfast it was known that the fleet was to start and steam as far as the south side of the Bitter Lakes, and anchor there for the night.

At the entrance from the canal into Lake Timsah there lay an unfortunate Egyptian frigate; she was hard and fast aground. That vessel had been the cause of nearly all the trouble and inconvenience that had occurred; it was in consequence of the bad luck of that frigate that so many doubts were expressed as to whether ships could get through the canal at all up to the last moment of opening. It appears that the Viceroy, in order to make certain that all was clear, and that all was right, went in her himself; but, long before she got to Lake Timsah, she took the ground, and, had she remained where she grounded, it would have been impossible for the procession to have passed. A telegram was immediately sent about midnight on the 16th, from the frigate to the Viceroy's yacht, the Mahrousa, at Port Said, to muster 300 men at once to go to the assistance of the vessel aground; and by the time the men were ready, the Viceroy himself arrived at Port Said, and gave instructions that the vessel was to be got off, and if any person in charge of the frigate obstructed them, they were to throw him overboard. The vessel was, however, got off, and moored in one of the gares, and the Canal was clear on the morning of the 17th. On the 18th, this same vessel, after most of the vessels had passed her, got underweigh, and made another attempt to get to Lake Timsah; but just as she was entering the Lake, she again took the ground, and there she lay, a

perfect nuisance to every vessel that was astern of her. Among those who were unfortunate enough to be behind her was the Peninsular and Oriental Company's boat, the *Delta*, which had on board many ladies anxious to be at the ball at Ismailia, and many of whom were disappointed.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 19th the French Imperial yacht, *Aigle*, commenced to make a move, and this was the signal for all other vessels to make ready. The Graif, Austrian Imperial yacht, was the next to follow the *Aigle*; then followed the Austrian gunboat, *Capitano*; after her the Prussian Royal yacht and a Russian gunboat, the Netherlands Royal yacht, Her Majesty's ship *Psyche*, dispatch-boat, followed by two English steam launches; next a Russian frigate; the *Hawk*, belonging to the Telegraph Maintenance and Construction Company; Her Majesty's ship *Rapid*; the *Actif*, French gunboat; the *Vulcan*, Austrian Lloyd's; the *Peluse*, one of the *Messageries Impériales*; the *Forbin*, French corvette; the *Bruat*, French gunboat; the *Deerhound*, belonging to the Royal squadron, with Sir S. Stukely and Sir Stafford Northcote on board; the *Zouave*; Her Majesty's ship *Newport*, surveying vessel; and about twenty-five others.

There was a great deal of trying to cut each other out, and some little damage was done by collisions, and some very angry words passed between the commanders of a British and a French man-of-war when their vessels got too close to each other; as a rule, however, things went on very well and very pleasantly.

The number of vessels in Lake Timsah on the morning of the 19th November, was about forty-two, and their tonnage was from 3,500 tons down to 250. They may be classed as follows, viz.,—four over 2,000 tons, twelve over 1,500 tons, fifteen over 1000 tons, and the remainder under 1000; they were all steamers, excepting the little *Cambria*, before-mentioned. - On starting, the weather was very fine, with a cool

breeze from the west-north-west. A more delightful day could not be desired ; and, when looking back on the lake, one could not help being struck with the scene which presented itself ; and it is not easy to describe the feelings, when one's thoughts reverted to the fact that only a very short time ago a camel would groan to be in the neighbourhood of Lake Timsah. It was in fact, a place for a "Scapegoat," a desert uninhabited, excepting by alligators ; it was a muddy bog, or marsh, sufficiently deep to swamp any animal that dared to put its foot on it ; and it was surrounded by desert sands, which, in fine weather, would hurt your eyes to look at its sameness. In a storm, you would not dare to open your eyes, it would blind you ; in a calm, the sun would scorch you ; and, independent of all that, it was just the place where you might hunger and thirst to death. Look at it now ; see the beautifully clear blue water, as clear as the sky above it, but slightly tinted with the breezes. See the wonderful machinery that dots the lake in every direction ; there is the mighty dredger, which necessity invented, to be seen wherever you look ; they seem idle, out of work, or having a holiday. Just fancy, 285 machines, representing a force equal to 18,000 horses, and consuming 12,000 tons of coal per month, from the gigantic dredger, down to the smallest dredge, from the ponderous *élévateur*, to the smallest hand machines ; everything of the most costly kind, and elaborate finish. And to supply these machines, and the people who were working them, with Nile water, before the fresh water Canal was constructed from Zagazig, through fifty miles of howling wilderness, to Ismailia, it needed 3,000 camels and donkeys. The above will give the reader some idea of the magnitude of the work performed, and which is still further illustrated by the sketch which accompanies this. This engineering work is likely to be a precedent for cutting through other parts, and, in time, may change the old channels of navigation.

When leaving Lake Timsah, going toward the Bitter Lakes, the entrance to the Canal may be found difficult for light, long ships, when they are going slow with a strong wind, as in going through in the Hawk I noticed it was not easy to keep her head pointed to mid-channel, in consequence of the wind, which was on the starboard quarter, bringing her head against the starboard helm. This, however, would not have happened had they been able to keep way on the vessel, which could not be done in consequence of other vessels in the procession being quite close-to-ahead. Powerful rudders will be necessary in the Canal; and I am of opinion that Dr. Croft's fish-tail rudder will be found to be most useful, from what I know of it. With that, or something of the kind, to make the vessel answer the helm quick, and the help of pilots, who will soon get used to every part of the Canal, a vessel will be able to dash through at eight to ten miles per hour.

At the last-mentioned part there is a curve, and although the water is about a mile wide, the channel is only the ordinary width of the Canal, but it is marked by a long line of beacons, which have two flat round iron plates on the upper end to represent a black ball at a distance.

After passing through the iron beacons, you then come to a strait piece of canal with pure white sand heaped up on both sides, and at present there is not the least sign of vegetation. They had the appearance of having been thrown up only a very short time, and there were some dredgers lying about which seemed quite ready to go to work again. About half-way through this straight piece of work is Serapeum; and it is here where the obstruction is, and where it was said there was only eighteen feet of water, and some people think it will be necessary to dam it, in order to blast away the rocks. It cannot, however, be a very wide obstruction, and the authorities say it will be removed by the end of January.

Shortly after passing Serapeum—and quite a straight

course—you open out the Bitter Lake, which is a magnificent sheet of clear blue water, surrounded by low sandy desert land; it is not the white kind of sand which shifts and is blown about by the winds; but it is a kind of brown sand, which has been darkened by the sun of ages, and has a hard sort of crust over it, which is not very much unlike the top crust of a well-baked pie. It is this kind of sand that when wetted springs into vegetation; and when the trees which are planted along the fresh-water canal get larger, they will draw the moist clouds which will burst over them, rain will fall, and vegetation follow.

When entering the Bitter Lake, from the deep cutting of the Canal, you do not at once get into the open deep water of the lake, but you have to pass through the shallow edge of the Canal, which has been deepened and marked with the same kind of iron beacons as described when leaving Lake Timsah. Some of these beacons had lanterns on them to shew the channel by night, and after passing through these you come to a large iron light-house, apparently built on iron piles, and which can be seen plainly from one side of the lake to the other.

After passing this you are in the open lake, and you then get into about five fathoms of water, and there is room for thousands of ships to sail about or anchor. On the starboard hand, going toward Suez, is the Railway and the Canal, running side by side between Suez and Ismailia, and from a vessel's deck the white jet of steam can be seen puffing out from the locomotive as it runs across the desert in the distance.

On the port side of the lake is a place called El Ambak, but nothing can be seen on that side but the lumpy sand. Not many months ago, this lake used to be crossed on horseback or on camels, and there was laying at the bottom of it about two feet of salt, the result of the evaporation of days gone by, and it was noticed that the salt accumulated much faster in the steamer's boilers, while in the bitter lake, than elsewhere.

After crossing this lake you come to another lighthouse, precisely the same as the one before mentioned, and it was about half a mile outside this that some of the fleet, which formed the first division of the procession, anchored for the night, having, of course, both lights in sight all the time.

Soon after daylight, on November 20th, we all began to make a move, and a Suez pilot was put on board of each ship, and at about half-past seven, we found ourselves the seventh ship passing the lighthouse.

This channel, like the other, is marked with the same kind of beacons, and there are more of them here than at any other part of the Canal, and although the lake is wide, the Channel is only the Canal width. This part, like some other places before mentioned, is not easy to navigate, with the wind blowing hard on the quarter and going quite slow, but there is no difficulty going at moderate speed.

Next come the small Bitter Lakes, and Mount Gabel Attaker is seen on the starboard bow. This is a little over ten miles from Suez. It was a beautiful day, and the clear blue water was shining out in delicious contrast with the barren sand of the desert, which latter is visible for miles round.

After passing through the small Bitter Lakes, you again enter the Canal proper, where the sand has been dredged to a depth of over twenty-six feet and used for embankments, and we were able to steam through this part at the rate of seven and a half miles per hour; it was here that the tide or current commenced to run faster. In the other parts of the Canal there seemed to be a continual set towards Port Said, at the rate of one mile per hour, but here it increased. The state of the tide at Suez was about two hours and fifteen minutes before high water, therefore the pressure of the Red Sea was on the mouth of the Canal, and sent the current fast through. At Suez the spring tides rise six feet, therefore, the depth of

water in the Canal, and the force of the current must, to some extent, be influenced thereby.

At 11 o'clock a.m. on the 20th of November, we were steaming through a magnificent cutting which ran through sandstone, beautifully finished, with plenty of water in it; it was in this part that the tide or current increased to three knots per hour, and the vessel was going through the water at least eight knots. Any vessel might increase her speed to ten, as it is only necessary to keep her in mid-channel, which can be done, with careful steering, if the wind is strong.

At noon Suez was visible; the *Impératrice Eugénie* had arrived there, and the ships of war were saluting her. As we sighted the old town of Suez, and just before we entered the Red Sea, the water in the Canal shoaled from twenty-nine feet to twenty-six, and shortly afterwards deepened again to thirty feet. We continued to carry that depth until we let go the anchor just past the site for the new docks and township.

It is a strange sight; and a wondrous funny feeling comes over one on entering the Red Sea. You can scarcely realize that you were, only a short time ago, in the Mediterranean, and that you have come right through, ship and all.

It will be observed by the sketch, that the mouth of the Canal widens as you approach the anchorage at Suez, and that it is necessary to keep close in to the side, where the new docks are, but not too close, because there is a shoal formed, but it only extended a few yards from the reclaimed ground, when we passed, and is shown on the plan.

There is one thing in connection with the Canal which seemed quite clear to me, viz., that it would be almost impossible to lose a ship in it. A vessel might stick on the bank on either side, and may have to be lightened before she is got off again; and that need not happen, if ordinary care is taken.

As I have before said, a vessel might steam right through in twenty hours.

Respecting the vessels grounding, and blocking up the Canal, there really was nothing to speak of more than might be expected among such a large fleet of ships. The Egyptian frigate (which I have mentioned more than once), and the paddle steamer, "Fayoom," were the two principal offenders. Another vessel got her screw fouled. Other little incidents may have happened, but they were not worth mentioning.

In the evening a dinner was given, on board the Hawk, by Mr. Pender, whose hospitality many of the guests of the Viceroy will not forget in days to come; and there never was a better dinner laid abaft the funnel of a steamer.

On the morning of the 21st a steam-tender came alongside of the Hawk, and took all the guests to the railway station at Suez, and at about seven o'clock the train started, as full as it could be crammed with visitors. This journey was the most trying. We were the whole of twelve hours, going very slowly and hanging about the side lines, without a chance of getting refreshments; with the exception of this blunder, the whole of the arrangements, so far as I know, were all that could be desired; and a more magnificent arrangement for enjoyment could not be conceived. From the time I gained the P. and O. boat, at Marseilles, until I found myself in Paris, on my way back, and during the whole of the journey, it was one continual drag on the long purse of the Khedive.

There were many persons who were invited that did not understand the full extent of the invitation, and, I confess, I was one of them. We were very often in doubt as to whether proper arrangements were made for us, and it was not until it was half over, that I understood the magnitude of the arrangements, and found out that the Khedive's invitation meant that you were to go to Egypt at his expense, see the greatest sight in all creation, enjoy yourself in every other possible way,

and he would pay. It meant that you could join one of the P. & O. boats at Southampton, or at Marseilles, or you might go by the Messageries Impériales steamers, on board of which arrangements had been made that you should be received as his guest, and treated as a first-class passenger, so far as Alexandria; on arriving there, an officer belonging to the Egyptian Government waited upon you, and gave you the name of the hotel where rooms were provided. He would make it known to you that a steam tender was alongside the vessel, ready to receive you and your luggage, and convey both to the landing place. There a carriage was waiting to drive you to the hotel, and when there, you were to order whatever you wished, to eat, drink, and to smoke; and, if you wished to see the sights of Egypt, you had only to look over the balcony of the hotel and you would see a long line of carriages, and all you had to do was to hold up your finger to a driver, and one would be at your service, and you would be driven to any place desired, until the horses were knocked up, when they would be changed for another pair, and when you were tired, all you had to do was to hand the coachman your card, with the time you had occupied him marked on it.

When the proper time arrived, a notice was sent to the hotels intimating that several of the finest steam-ships in the world, belonging to the Viceroy, were placed at the service of his guests, for whom arrangements had been made to go on board at such an hour and be taken on to Port Said in time for the ceremonies. These being over, you would be conveyed, through the Canal, to Ismallia in time for the festivities, after which you were to embark, and be taken on again through the Canal, into the Red Sea, and to Suez, and thence to Cairo by railway in time for the festivities there. At the railway station at Cairo, carriages would be waiting to drive you to the hotel, where you were expected to join in all the festive gaiety. The ball at Cairo I have not the power to describe. There

were ladies there whose costumes cost a small fortune. Having remained in Cairo as long as you felt inclined, where carriages were at your service, you might leave, or, if you felt so inclined, you might go up the Nile—steamers were at your command; or, if you wished to leave Egypt, you were to take a carriage to the station, shew your invitation, and a first-class ticket was handed to you for Alexandria, and at the refreshment rooms on the line, you found luncheon provided for you free; on arriving again at Alexandria, the same arrangements as before were continued, and you had only to present yourself to Calachey Bey, who had to provide you with a passage in any ship you named, at the same time informing you that the Viceroy's yacht, the "Masr," 3,800 tons, one of the finest ships that ever floated, and commanded by a thorough sailor and a gentleman, (one whose courtesy many of the Viceroy's guests will not forget), would take you to Brindisi, and at that port, a commissioner of the Viceroy's would frank you on as far as that Company's line would take you, viz., to Bologna; when there, you were franked on to Susa, and asked by another commissioner of the Viceroy's at Bologna, if you would be good enough to receive the sum of 107 francs, the exact price of a first-class ticket from Susa to Paris, it being impossible to book through to Paris from Bologna. Such was the hospitality received at the expense of the Viceroy of Egypt, on the memorable occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal—the hospitality was worthy of the occasion, and the occasion was worthy of the hospitality.

Notwithstanding that the English (with a few exceptions) were the last to believe the Canal a success, now that it is really open for traffic, they are far in advance of any other nation. Many vessels have already been sent through, and strenuous efforts are still being made to lay hold of every advantage the Canal may present to facilitate communications with the East for commercial and other purposes. Captains

of vessels have been astonished at the facility with which the passage has been accomplished. The two or three points, which, at the opening, presented some obstacles [have been remedied, and the finishing touches have been given without any impediment to navigation. At Serapeum, where there were only eighteen feet of water (at the time of the inauguration) it has been deepened to about twenty feet six inches.

A steamer, the *Stirling*, (from Glasgow), proceeded from Port Said direct for Bombay, and made the passage through the Canal in something under sixteen hours. At the beginning of the year 1870 there were upwards of sixty steamers lading in different ports of Europe, which vessels intend passing through the Canal. The names of some of the largest of the vessels that have passed, or will pass, are as follows:—

The *Brazilian*, of 2,815 tons register; the *Queen of the South*, 2,097 tons; the *Mauritius*, 2,150 tons; the *Bolivian*, 2,815 tons. The above are English, and there are many others known to be on their way.

The Canal is 196 feet in width at the surface of the water, and 26 feet deep across, for 72 feet at the bottom, at the following places:—

|                                                |           |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| From near El Ferdam to Lake Timsah . . . . .   | 9½ miles. |
| From Lake Timsah to the Bitter Lakes . . . . . | 7½ „      |
| Through the Chalouf Cutting . . . . .          | 5 „       |
| Total . . . . .                                | 22 „      |

The wider sections having a width of surface of 327 feet, with a depth of 26 feet, for 72 feet, with slopes and horizontal benches to the the banks, are as follows:—

|                                        |           |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| From Port Said to El Ferdam . . . . .  | 37 miles. |
| Through Lake Timsah . . . . .          | 5½ „      |
| Through the Bitter Lakes . . . . .     | 23½ „     |
| At the Suez end of the Canal . . . . . | 11 „      |
| Total . . . . .                        | 77 „      |

These depths will be uniform when the dredging operations are finally completed.



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